

# Appendix D

## LAPAC Definitions - Land Acquisition Focus Areas and Other Important Priorities

### Focus Areas

**Please note:** Not all of the original “Focus Areas” or “Other Important Priorities” are reflected in the LAPAC Multiplier on page 34 because they are addressed in other parts of the scoring system.

**\* Southern Maine Conservation Lands:** The southern portion of the state (south of Bangor) is richest in biological diversity. It is also the part of the state where development threats to plant and wildlife resources are the greatest and where existing public land holdings are most limited, particularly larger holdings. There are still opportunities to acquire significant public lands protecting critical natural resources while also providing Maine's largest population centers with greater access to expanded recreation opportunities closer to home.

**\* Ecological Reserves:** Maine is a state of enormous natural variety. A State Planning Office study and follow-up efforts by the Maine Forest Biodiversity Project (a collaborative effort involving State agencies, landowners, scientists, and environmentalists), have documented that Maine's existing conservation ownerships do not protect the full range of Maine's native plants, animals, and natural communities. In order to establish an ecological reserve system that protects all of the natural communities and species found in the State, additional lands will need to be acquired to complement existing sites. Special attention should be given to those areas that include rare species, as well as unique or exemplary natural communities. Ecological reserves can serve as benchmarks which will provide important information about changes to our environment. These sites can be used for scientific research, long-term environmental monitoring, education, and in most cases can also provide important outdoor recreation opportunities.

**\* River Systems:** Maine possesses some of the finest river systems in the Eastern United States, many of which remain largely undeveloped. These rivers are important fisheries, possess critical riparian habitat, and provide unparalleled outdoor recreation opportunities. Future acquisition efforts should protect extended corridors on the state's most valued river systems.

**\* Undeveloped Coastline:** Maine is famous for its coastline. However, only a small percentage of the coast is in public ownership. In particular, there are significant undeveloped stretches of shore, including coastal wetlands and estuaries, that provide critical habitat to many species of wildlife and offer opportunities for expanded coastal recreation. It is important to take advantage of remaining opportunities before large ownerships become fragmented.

### **Other Important Land Acquisition Priorities**

**Northern Forest Conservation Lands:** The expanse of undeveloped forest, rivers, lakes, mountains and wetlands that comprise the north woods of Maine is truly unique, providing a sense of wildness and remoteness that is becoming increasingly rare in today's world. It is the part of the State where the majority of public ownership currently exists, and yet many of the region's finest natural treasures and recreational lands have been maintained in private ownership. Some of these areas, most notably the shorelines of lakes and ponds, are coming under increasing development pressures.

The future of the north woods is the subject of great public interest that will likely increase in the years to come. Several large-scale acquisition proposals put forward by conservation groups have precipitated a debate over the appropriate role for public land acquisition in the northern forest. The State has both the opportunity, and the responsibility, to work cooperatively with forest landowners and other interests to develop workable acquisition models that protect the economic, ecological and recreational values of this region. Conservation easements should play an important role in this effort.

In the near term, acquisition efforts in the northern forest should focus on those lands that possess a high concentration of wildlife, recreation, and scenic values and are most threatened with fragmentation and development. Planning efforts coordinated by LMFB should seek to identify these priorities and to develop successful acquisition strategies that could then be utilized in these areas and elsewhere. If large northern forest tracts come on to the market, LMFB should evaluate both the threat and opportunity presented by the land sale, and respond accordingly. The conservation goal for Northern Forest Conservation Lands should be to maintain their natural character, preserve public recreation opportunities, and protect important habitat. To acquire, even conservation easements, over large tracts of northern forest land will likely require federal funding assistance. The Forest Legacy program is well suited to Maine's working forest landscape and allows for state control over acquisition projects. This program, and other appropriate federal funding opportunities, should be actively pursued to achieve the state's northern forest goals.

**Trail Systems:** A number of trail development efforts in Maine--including the State snowmobile trail network, the Appalachian Trail, and the recently established island trail network--have proven very successful. However, there are additional recreational trail needs and opportunities that require attention including the development of extended loop hiking trails (2-5 days), as well as the creation of extended interconnected multi-use trail systems for

uses such as hiking, biking, skiing, and snowmobiling and ATV riding. In particular, acquisition efforts should focus on opportunities to link existing public land holdings by trail corridors and to acquire ready-made trail corridors such as abandoned railroad beds. Additionally, expanded inland and coastal water trail systems are needed to accommodate small boat use.

**Islands:** Maine's coastal and inland islands are one of the state's most unique and threatened resources. Islands, particularly coastal islands, have become increasingly sought after for development, threatening bird nesting habitat and other sensitive ecological values. The State, private conservation organizations, and the federal government have successfully protected many valuable islands in recent years. However, additional acquisition efforts are needed to protect those islands identified as having important resource values that remain vulnerable to development and habitat loss.

**Significant Mountains:** While many of the state's highest peaks are currently in the public domain, there are still a number of significant mountains in private hands that are worthy of public acquisition. Acquisition efforts should focus on those mountain areas with outstanding vistas, established recreational uses, or significant ecological values, as well as those that are in close proximity to population centers.